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ABSTRACT

The Field-Initiated Studies program is open to institutions of higher education, public and private organizations, institutions, and agencies, as well as individuals. Applicants may propose projects that last up to 18 months, and proposals are reviewed and evaluated based on their technical quality and national importance judged by scholars and practitioners outside the federal government. This booklet contains descriptions (including the title, research objectives, project design, principal investigator, award amount, and availability information) of 13 projects funded in 1992. Topics and research methodologies are diverse. In fiscal year 1992, funded projects included work in the following areas: (1) academic achievement of minority students; (2) portfolio assessment; (3) communication strategies for children with hearing loss; (4) reflective thinking; (5) classroom reorganization; (6) identifying academically gifted elementary school students; (7) adult basic education; (8) racial differences in college retention; (9) sexual abuse in schools; (10) teacher preparation; (11) special education and at-risk students; (12) authentic assessment in middle school science; and (13) assessing mathematical thinking for high-risk students. (SLD)

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Field Initiated Studies Program

Abstracts of Funded Projects 1992

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An announcement in the *Federal Register* lets the public know whether the program will operate in the upcoming fiscal year, when application packages will be available, and when applications are due. In the past, the *Federal Register* announcement has appeared in the fall as part of the U.S. Department of Education's general notice inviting applications for a variety of programs.

The Field-Initiated Studies program has accepted proposals and made grant awards on an annual cycle. Please note this is subject to change at any time. This description is provided for general information only.

For more information about the Field-Initiated Studies program or to be included on the mailing list, please contact:

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Field Initiated Studies Program

Abstracts of Funded Projects 1992

Spring 1993

U.S. Department of Education
Richard W. Riley
Secretary

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Emerson J. Elliott
Acting Assistant Secretary

Office of Research
Joseph C. Conaty
Acting Director

April 1993

Foreword

The Field-Initiated Studies program is an integral part of the Office of Research. It is a source of new directions and fresh ideas.

This booklet contains descriptions of projects funded in 1992. As you will readily see, the topics and research methodologies are diverse. From projects in school districts seeking better ways to identify highly able students early in their school careers to projects examining the differences between teachers prepared through college-based programs and alternate routes, the program displays education research as a vibrant enterprise.

The Office of Research is vitally interested in the scope and potential of the research that comes directly from researchers and educators across the country. Research is a critical element in national systemic reform efforts. While less than 5 percent of the proposals received are funded, many more deserve support.

You are invited to contact the principal investigators directly to discuss their projects and findings. The Field-Initiated Studies program has put increasing emphasis on the dissemination of research findings. Principal investigators are expected to make their findings available in useful forms to audiences who can put them into practice. We know education research is an important part of school improvement efforts.

My thanks and appreciation are extended to all the educators whose good ideas make this program possible. Delores Monroe, the program coordinator, and many other Office of Research staff contribute to the success of this program. Through all these efforts, the research ideas become a reality.

Joseph Conaty
Acting Director
Office of Research
Office of Educational Research
and Improvement

Southeast Asian Education Research Project

Research Objective: This study will explore factors that contribute to the educational performance of Southeast Asian refugee students in order to develop early intervention techniques to decrease their high school dropout rate.

Project Design: Two hundred and forty Southeast Asian elementary school students and their parents will be interviewed about the children's relationships with teachers, family members, and peers; academic successes and failures; strategies for success; self-esteem; English-language proficiency; and learning environments at home, in school, and in the community. Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Ethnic Chinese refugees will be included.

Interview data will be analyzed to identify common variables that contribute to the school success or failure of Southeast Asian students. Once these factors are identified, instructional strategies to remove barriers to Southeast Asian children's academic achievement and to improve social and survival skills will be developed.

Principal Investigator: Leland Yee
Asian Americans for Community Involvement
232 East Gish Road, 2nd Floor
San Jose, CA 95112
408-452-5151

Award Amount: $64,349 **Grant Number:** R117E20105

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by fall 1993.

Evaluating Some Effects of Portfolio Assessment on Classroom Practices and Student Achievement

Research Objective: This study will investigate how K–12 teachers learn to use portfolios containing actual work samples to assess students' progress in the language arts. The effects of such authentic assessment on classroom management and student outcomes will also be examined.

Project Design: The study will involve 15 kindergarten through twelfth-grade teacher-researchers who are committed to whole-language classrooms and to assessing student progress through performance-based measures. Two leaders will conduct monthly meetings of the group at which participating teachers will develop research projects that address some aspect of portfolio assessment with relevance to their classrooms. Between monthly meetings, teachers will collect data from classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires, and informal meetings.

For the first third of the year, the teachers will explore the implications of qualitative research and refine their research questions. The second third will be devoted to data collection, which may include log entries, classroom descriptions, videotapes or audiotapes, questionnaires, interviews, and work folders.

Data will be analyzed, and during the final third of the year, the teacher researchers will produce their research findings and conclusions that will be disseminated to principals, other instructional staff, and the larger educational community.

Principal Investigator: Frederique Wynberg
Vallejo City Unified School District
211 Valle Vista Avenue
Vallejo, CA 94590
707-644-8921, Ext. 1069

Award Amount: $78,630 **Grant Number:** R117E20200

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by fall 1993.

Effects of EAR Team Collaboration Within Regular Education Programs

Research Objective: This study will examine how the Educational and Audiological Review (EAR) Team's communication strategies for children with minimal and mild hearing loss produce measurable differences in communication behaviors for these students, their normal-hearing peers, and teachers in the regular classroom.

Project Design: The study will involve 120 kindergarten through third-grade children with hearing loss who are in full-day regular classrooms, along with 460 peers and their teachers. Various groupings will be made based on the extent of communication training the children and teachers have received from the EAR Team. Sixteen observers will collect pre- and post-training classroom data on the following communication behaviors:

1. Facing others while speaking;
2. Looking at the speaker while listening;
3. Choosing classroom position to enhance communication;
4. Requesting clarification of a spoken message; and
5. Providing verbal reinforcement for contributions to quiet learning environment.

Two analyses will be completed: one on differences in communication behaviors based on the EAR Team experience and collaboration among teachers and one on such differences among students.

Principal Investigator: Christina Locher
Central Association for Special Education
2240 East Geddes Avenue
Decatur, IL 62526
217-424-3420

Award Amount: $56,170 **Grant Number:** R117E20163

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by fall 1993.

Story Discussions That Promote Reflective Thinking

Research Objective: This project will investigate how students can learn to reason independently and think critically as they take positions on significant issues in the texts they read. Implications of this instructional strategy for teachers and for at-risk students will be explored.

Project Design: Two separate studies will be undertaken. The first will involve six fourth-grade teachers and their students and will compare traditional, largely teacher-led, plot-based discussions with reflective discussions that require each child to take a position on a significant issue raised in a story and present reasons and evidence for their positions. Videotapes, transcripts, interviews, and reading comprehension tests will be used to assess the effectiveness of the two methods.

The second study will involve two fourth-grade teachers and their fifty students in low-income, culturally diverse neighborhoods. Baseline reading lessons will be videotaped, and then the teachers will receive extensive training in conducting reflective discussions. Researchers will observe how at-risk students acquire thinking skills through reflective discussion and how teachers change their instructional strategies as a result of the training.

Principal Investigator: Richard C. Anderson
University of Illinois
105 Davenport House
809 South Wright Street
Champaign, IL 61820–6219
217-333-2552

Award Amount: $79,812 **Grant Number:** R117E20218

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by spring 1994.

Peace With Honor(s): Winning the Battle of Requirements by Changing the Rules, the Roles, and the Referees

Research Objective: The study will examine the academic and social effects of reorganizing classrooms so all students have access to high-content curriculum, students and teachers collaborate to prepare for examinations by qualified external parties, and teachers serve as academic coaches.

Project Design: A field experiment will be conducted in a high school with ninth-graders. Students will be randomly assigned to participate either in an experimental program or the traditional program in which students select their biology and English courses based on degree of difficulty. The experimental program has the following main components:

1. An honors level curriculum in biology and English with improvement-focused evaluation and recognition;
2. Externally evaluated performance-based examinations three times per quarter in each subject; and
3. Teachers as coaches who model skills and processes, provide individualized practice and feedback, and create cooperative learning activities.

The study will compare data on achievement, attitude, motivation, and student-teacher relationships in the experimental and traditional programs.

Principal Investigator: Douglas J. Mac Iver
Johns Hopkins University
Charles and 34th Streets
Baltimore, MD 21218
410-516-8668

Award Amount: $78,179 **Grant Number:** R117E20112

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by spring 1994.

Identifying and Developing Advanced Capabilities in the Primary Grades

Research Objective: This research will result in an observation-based program to identify highly able kindergarten and first-grade students, especially minority students, for participation in gifted and talented programs. The program will increase these students' academic achievement and help parents provide supportive and nurturing environments for them.

Project Design: Approximately 80 teachers and 1,400 kindergarten and first-grade students in eight experimental and eight non-project schools with similar compositions will participate in the project. Teachers in the experimental schools will be trained to conduct 15 lessons at each grade level designed to bring out behaviors predictive of advanced capabilities.

In each lesson, the teachers will initiate exploration, and students will work in pairs or small groups with little additional direction. The teacher will then observe how students solve problems, express creativity, and demonstrate commitment to the task. In addition, parents in the experimental schools will learn how to support their children's learning at home and will have access to a resource area for materials and meetings.

Current school measures for identifying gifted students such as diagnostic reading tests and ability tests will be compared with the observation record sheets to examine their effectiveness in identifying gifted students, especially gifted minority students.

Principal Investigators: Patricia Price and Neal Fertitta
Anne Arundel County Public Schools
2644 Riva Road
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-224-5432

Award Amount: $69,000 **Grant Number:** R117E20141

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by spring 1994.

Adult Basic Education Math: A Research Project

Research Objective: Using standards recently developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), researchers will study mathematics teaching in adult education. The project will produce a profile of existing practices, teacher qualities, and learner preferences that will be used to plan staff development and technical assistance to improve the quality of mathematics instruction for adults and meet NCTM standards.

Project Design: A survey instrument will be developed and employed at 25 Adult Basic Education (ABE) sites in Massachusetts. Three broad questions will be explored:

1. How is math taught?
2. Who is teaching math?
3. What are the perceptions of adult learners about math instruction in their ABE classrooms?

Direct, instrument-guided observation of mathematics instruction in ABE classrooms and interviews with instructors will be used for the first question. The second question will be addressed through interviews, questionnaires, and skills assessments completed by 50 instructors. A group of secondary school math teachers will be used as controls to compare instructor background, skills, and attitudes.

Learners are the primary data source for the third question. Five focus groups of adult learners will be conducted, and 10 learners will be interviewed. Interview transcripts will be analyzed to produce a profile of learner insights into the teaching and learning of mathematics.

Principal Investigator: John P. Comings
World Education, Inc.
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
617-482-9485

Award Amount: $86,058 **Grant Number:** R117E20113

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by spring 1994.

Understanding Racial Differences in College Retention: The Relative Importance of Racial Climate and Remediation

Research Objective: The study seeks to determine why, among students entering college, blacks complete bachelor's degrees at a lower rate than whites to understand better how to close the gap in college completion rates.

Project Design: Through statistical modeling, investigators will evaluate the relative importance of factors driving racial differences in retention: academic matching or mismatching and racial climate.

Data from the High School and Beyond (HSB) survey, institutional average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, and minority enrollment will be used to explore four questions:

1. How widespread is academic mismatching?
2. To what extent does race play a role in academic mismatch?
3. How does the degree of mismatch affect the probability of finishing college?
4. How does being in a school's racial minority or majority affect one's chance of finishing, other factors being constant?

A maximum-likelihood framework will be used to account for institutional selectivity and the fact that the HSB survey only covers the first 6 years after high school graduation. More information will be gathered on young people who do not go on to college or who enroll in one school rather than another.

Principal Investigator: Thomas J. Kane
Harvard University
79 John F. Kennedy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-496-1072

Award: $49,546 **Grant Number:** R117E20076

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by fall 1993.

In Loco Parentis: Sexual Abuse in Schools

Research Objective: This project will describe the policy and practice issues that emerge when sexual abuse involving a school employee and a student is reported to have occurred. Materials to help administrators respond more effectively to reports of sexual abuse will be produced.

Project Design: A sample of 184 school superintendents from urban, suburban, and rural districts with diverse student populations were interviewed by phone about sexual abuse allegations that had surfaced during their tenure. Ten of their districts have been selected for in-depth study, based on geographic type, economic background, type of abuse reported, and the reported resolution.

Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with administrators, school board members, teachers, guidance and social service staff, and union representatives. Their accounts of the alleged incident, its outcome, the district's response to the student and the accused, old and new policies and practices, and the interviewee's recommendations will be tape recorded. Documents about the case, including newspaper articles, school memos, and legal briefs, will also be examined and analyzed.

Using qualitative analysis techniques and computer-assisted strategies, major themes will be identified. Two products will result: a manuscript detailing the findings and materials for administrators, teachers, school employees, and parents that describe sexual abuse in the schools, present model responses, and offer guidelines for appropriate behavior, including physical contact between school personnel and students.

Principal Investigator: Charol Shakeshaft
Hofstra University
1000 Fulton Avenue
Hempstead, NY 11550–1090
516-463-5758

Award Amount: $76,258 **Grant Number:** R117E20142

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by winter 1994.

A Follow-Up Study of Alternate-Route and College-Prepared Teachers

Research Objective: This longitudinal study examines how teachers prepared through alternate-route and college-based programs compare in terms of teaching situations, views of the teaching profession, and retention in the field.

Project Design: This study will follow up on a cohort of individuals who were first studied as they entered the teaching profession in 1987. The original sample included 187 elementary, English, and mathematics teachers who entered the profession after a traditional, college-based preparation program and 129 elementary, English, and mathematics teachers who were prepared through an alternative certification program. Both groups completed surveys during their student or initial teaching period and at the end of the first and second years of teaching. Samples of the groups were also interviewed in depth at several points.

A mail survey of the original sample and a phone interview with the smaller sample will be conducted. Data will be collected in three areas:

1. Do alternate-route teachers continue to be more likely to teach in low socioeconomic districts and have remedial classes?
2. Have the views of both groups on financial compensation and working conditions converged?
3. Are retention patterns apparent at three years maintained into the sixth year of teaching?

Of particular interest is the question of whether males and minorities who were attracted to the profession by the alternate route continue to teach.

Principal Investigator: Gary Natriello
Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York, NY 10027
212-678-3087

Award Amount: $80,901 **Grant Number:** R117E20005

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by fall 1993.

Referring At-Risk Pupils to Special Education

Research Objective: The study will investigate why some at-risk, inner-city pupils are referred by their classroom teachers for special education placement, and why other, seemingly comparable, pupils are neither referred nor placed in the special education network. A report on refining the referral process will be prepared.

Project Design: The investigators will use field-based methods to determine what factors relate to the special education referrals made by K–3 teachers in six schools. In fall 1992, the teachers will be asked to complete two questionnaires providing academic and behavioral ratings for the lowest one-quarter to one-third of their pupils, about 750 children in all. In March 1993, the questionnaires will be re-administered to assess stability of the reported behaviors.

To validate teachers' responses, researchers will observe the academic engagement and classroom behavior of 10 percent of the targeted children in several classes. They will examine report cards and standardized test results to determine whether scores of referred and nonreferred children differ. Teachers will be interviewed about the reasons for their referral decisions, including perceptions of student behavior. Discriminant analysis will be used to determine how factors inherent to the referred child and factors external to the child influence the teacher's referral decision.

During the cross-validation stage of the study, the discriminant model fitted to Year 1 data will be used to predict Year 2 referrals from other inner-city schools serving the same and different populations.

Principal Investigators: Jay Gottlieb and Sharon Weinberg
New York University
New York, NY 10003
212-998-5396 or 212-998-5206

Award Amount: $68,783 **Grant Number:** R117E20177

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by spring 1994.

Doing Science: A School-College Collaboration Leading to Authentic Assessment in Middle Schools

Research Objective: This study has two main objectives: to explore the effectiveness of school-college partnerships in developing a science enrichment program for sixth-graders and to determine how authentic assessment can be used to measure student performance and improve instruction. A program guide for teachers and students is planned.

Project Design: In summer 1992, a team of college and middle school faculty will develop a hands-on, activity-based science enrichment program for sixth-graders in public and private schools. The first phase will consist of designing and implementing a laboratory approach to science instruction, with emphasis on problem-solving and critical thinking. The second phase will focus on generating student-directed research projects with guidance from mentors, including local scientists and medical personnel.

Two authentic assessment strategies, portfolio and performance-based testing, will measure student progress. A science fair sponsored by the university and the PTA will be the culminating activity.

The students' portfolios, laboratory activities, and oral reports on science literature will be analyzed for cognitive development. In addition, two attitude surveys will be used to measure the success of the school-college partnership and the teachers' and students' impressions of instruction geared towards the development of higher order thinking skills.

Principal Investigator: Joan Boorman
SUNY College at Oneonta
126 Physical Science Building
Oneonta, NY 13820
607-431-3348

Award: $80,819 **Grant Number:** R117E20006

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by spring 1994.

Assessing Mathematical Thinking in At-Risk Learners

Research Objective: Researchers will explore changes in mathematics assessment for at-risk students by focusing on environments that involve hands-on work, meaningful applications, and cooperative group interaction. A model for assessing the mathematical thinking of at-risk students will be developed.

Project Design: This study will assess the potential mathematics skills of minority and other at-risk students in grades five, seven, and nine at five schools through alternative assessment items and activities. Following the development of a database of alternative assessment items, protocols, scoring methods, and practices, selected items will be evaluated and refined by participating teachers. A set of 20 to 25 diverse prototype items at each grade level will be selected for their potential to draw out a student's math skills. These items will include large- and small-group activities; written, oral, and graphic presentations; and use of calculators and manipulatives.

The test items and administration procedures will then be pilot-tested with groups and individual students, particularly those in the lower fourth of mathematics achievement at their schools. Videotapes, observations, and holistic scoring, with credit given for understanding the problem, developing a workable approach, and arriving at the correct solution, will be used. In the final part of the project, students will be tested using the alternative items. Their scores on the alternative assessment will be compared with their results on a state-sponsored, multiple-choice test.

Principal Investigator: Gerald Kulm
Texas A&M University
College of Education
College Station, TX 77843
409-845-8395

Award: $98,130 **Grant Number:** R117E20049

Report Available: Report is expected to be underway by summer 1994.

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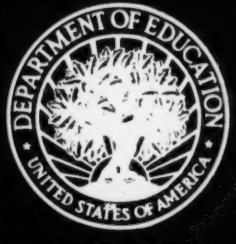

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